

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAJ-01 ACDA-05 /061 W

----- 114336

R 070111Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6357

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, FR, UK

SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEWS ON EUROPEAN UNITY AND LIBERALS
IN FRANCE

SUMMARY: FRENCH PROFESSOR, DURING TALK DECEMBER 5 TO
BRITISH LIBERAL PARTY MEMBERS, SAID MOST FRENCHMEN,
INCLUDING SOME GAULLISTS, WOULD SUPPORT LOSS OF SOME
FRENCH "SOVEREIGNTY" IN CREATION OF UNIFIED EUROPE.
THIS ISSUE, HOWEVER, WOULD FORCE REALIGNMENT OF POLITI-
CAL SUPPORT BEHIND GISCARD. HE SUGGESTED THAT FRENCH
LIBERALS, AS COMPARED WITH BRITISH PARTY, ARE SCATTERED
THROUGHOUT WIDE VARIETY OF OTHER PARTIES AND, BECAUSE
OF THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FRENCH POLITICS,
LIBERALS ARE BOTH FEW IN NUMBER IN FRANCE (ABOUT 5 OR AT
MOST 10 PERCENT OF ELECTORATE) AND PRESENTLY WITHOUT A
STRONG PERSONALITY WHO COULD SERVE AS RALLYING POINT.
END SUMMARY.

1. BRITISH LIBERALS, FROM TIME TO TIME, DEVOTE CONSID-
ERABLE ATTENTION TO LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL, AN ORGANIZA-
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TION OF LIBERAL PARTIES IN WESTERN EUROPE. ONE OF THE

ACTIVITIES THE BRITISH LIBERALS SPONSOR IS A SPEECH FROM A VISITING CONTINENTAL LIBERAL DIGNITARY. JACQUES ZIGHERA, PROFESSOR AT UNIVERSITY OF NANTERRE, SPOKE AT A MEETING DECEMBER 5 ATTENDED BY EMBOFF. ZIGHERA WAS DESCRIBED AS PROMINENT MEMBER OF FRENCH GROUP OF LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL AND OF RADICAUX DE GAUCHE.

2. SUBJECT OF HIS TALK WAS "THE FRENCH POLITICAL MYSTERY" AND IT TURNED OUT TO BE A LUCID AND BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE NATURE OF FRENCH POLITICS, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE "POLITIQUE DES NOTABLES," THE FRENCH CONCEPT OF PARTY MEMBERSHIP, AND THE NEED FOR POLITICAL MARRIAGES OR ALLIANCES OF CONVENIENCE.

3. ZIGHERA DID MAKE A FEW INTERESTING POINTS IN HIS SPEECH AND IN ANSWERING QUESTIONS. HE SAID THAT TRUE FRENCH LIBERALS ARE NOT ORGANIZED IN A STRONG PARTY BUT SCATTERED THROUGHOUT MANY PARTIES. ADMITTING THAT IT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO ASSESS LIBERAL STRENGTH ACCURATELY, HE NONETHELESS SUGGESTED TO EMBOFF THAT FRENCH LIBERALS WOULD AMOUNT TO ABOUT 5 PERCENT AND NO MORE THAN 10 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE IN THE LAST ELECTION. HE ALSO DISCUSSED FRENCH PROPOSALS FOR ELECTORAL REFORM, INCLUDING SOME VARIATIONS ON PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SCHEMES.

4. ZIGHERA ALSO VENTURED RATHER OPTIMISTIC VIEWS ABOUT THE SENTIMENTS OF FRENCHMEN ON EUROPEAN UNITY. HE VENTURED THAT "MOST" FRENCHMEN, EVEN SOME GAULLISTS, ARE QUITE PREPARED FOR SOME ATTRITION OF FRENCH SOVEREIGNTY WITH THE CREATION OF A STRONGER EUROPE. THIS DEVELOPMENT WOULD, OF COURSE, FORCE GISCARD TO SEEK A NEW ALIGNMENT OF SUPPORT, SINCE OVERALL GAULLIST SUPPORT FOR HIM WOULD DISSIPATE AND HE WOULD HAVE TO FIND OTHER ALLIES. HE MIGHT, HOWEVER, AS A RESULT END UP IN A CONSIDERABLY STRONGER POSITION.

5. COMMENT: AFTER HIS TALK, LIBERALS WERE MOST ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT ZIGHERA'S VISION OF ELECTORAL REFORM IN FRANCE. THEY SEEMED TO BELIEVE THAT THIS WOULD STRENGTHENED OFFICIAL USE

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THEN THEIR OWN CHANCES FOR SIMILAR EFFORTS IN BRITAIN; THIS HAS BEEN A CONTROVERSIAL DISCUSSION POINT IN LIBERAL MEETINGS, WITH A DECISION APPARENTLY REACHED THAT THE PARTY SHOULD NOT PRESS STRONGLY ON EITHER REFORM IN GENERAL OR ON PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION IN THE POST-ELECTION RE-EVALUATION ATMOSPHERE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 DEC 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LONDON16021
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740355-0784
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741252/aaaabsjy.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 APR 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <15-Aug-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRENCH VIEWS ON EUROPEAN UNITY AND LIBERALS IN FRANCE
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, FR, UK, XG
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005